

By Elsie Collier

I walked down the long driveway, my feet crunching on the layer of small stones that covered it. Bare, miserable trees loomed over me, their branches resembling fingers ready to come down and grab me. I could see the house up ahead. As I neared it, a sense of dread washed over me. Why had I come here?

The house was made up of chipped, grey bricks, covered in vines and moss. Several windows were smashed, indicating that I wasn't the first thrillseeker to come here. I tried the large oak doors, but they wouldn't budge. I hesitated, before climbing through a window and into an old, dusty living room.

The furniture was faded and dull. I knew nobody had lived here in a long time. There was an old-fashioned fireplace at the side of the room, and a framed photo of two children smiling. The photo looks strangely new; no dust had gathered on it and the colours were still bright. The light from the shattered window cascaded into the room in strange, jagged shapes, covering anything in its path.

I ventured into the entrance room where the locked doors stood firm. A cold, stone staircase led to the second floor. I was about to go up when I heard something that chilled my bones.

"Don't go up, don't go up, he's waiting..." a ghostly voice whispered into my ear. It sounded as if the person who had spoken was right next to me, but I was alone. There was no one else in the house.

I was tempted to turn back, to forget I had ever been here, but I had to come too far. Despite the warning, I climbed the stairs. They were covered in broken plaster from the walls and the dust that coated the entire house. As I reached the top step, I heard a child's cry, coming from a room at the end of the hallway. Distressed, afraid. My instincts kicked in, and I ran towards the room. If a child was in there, I had to save them. I charged through the door but stopped in my tracks.

I was in a completely empty room apart from a small wooden chair in the corner. However, it was covered in splashes of scarlet paint. Then, a smell resembling iron hit me. It wasn't paint.

I stepped into the room. There was no child.

Suddenly, the door slammed shut behind me and a figure appeared in front of me. He was pale and translucent, but I knew who he was. The owner of the house who had killed himself after the loss of his children. Killed himself on this very room, I now realised.

He took a step towards me and I got a clearer look at his face. It was covered in scratches and scars, and he was grinning malevolently. There was a large blood stain on his shirt from where he stabbed himself, all those years ago.

This man was the reason I was here. Rumour has it that if you disturbed his final resting place, he would chase you to the ends of the Earth. I had assumed that it was just that – a rumour. How wrong I had been.

He backed me against the wall. I could go through him, but I couldn't go through the knife he was holding.

"I have been trapped in this house," he said, "for 10 years. Now you will be trapped too."

I squeezed my eyes shut. Nothing happened.

I opened them again and gasped in shock. The man was gone and the door was open. I took my chance and ran out, not realising what was following behind...